



United States
Virgin Islands



Guam



Commonwealth of the
Northern Marianas
Islands



American Samoa

March 4, 2009

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As governors of the United States Territories, we applaud you for your leadership in developing, negotiating and signing into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (the "Act"), landmark legislation that will jump-start the nation's economy and help ensure the participation of all Americans in our desperately needed economic recovery.

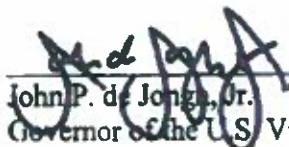
On behalf of our nearly half a million U.S. citizens, we are writing to request your support for additional flexibility in the administration of the provisions of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund that apply specifically to the insular areas of the United States. As you know, the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund is intended to provide fiscal relief to States and Territories in order to prevent budget cuts to education and other essential public services as a result of declining State and Territorial revenues. In recognizing the unique needs of the small Territories that are geographically and economically far removed from the U.S. mainland, the Act requires that the Secretary of Education set aside up to one-half of one percent of the total amount appropriated for the small Territories and provides additional flexibility in the administration of these funds. In particular, Section 14001(a) of the Act provides that "[f]rom the amount appropriated . . . , the Secretary of Education shall first allocate up to one-half of one percent to the outlying areas on the basis of their respective needs, as determined by the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, for activities consistent with this title under such terms and conditions as the Secretary may determine."

The needs of the U.S. Territories, for many historical reasons, exceed even the generous total funding allocated to the outlying areas under Section 14001(a), particular with respect to our underfunded and inadequate physical infrastructure. We wish to assure you that we not only have the need, but we also have the capacity to expend the entire amount of funding set aside under Section 14001(a).

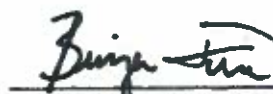
In determining how the Stabilization Funds shall be allocated and utilized, the Act requires that the Secretary of Education consult with the Secretary of the Interior in order to determine the respective needs of the Territories and to establish the terms and conditions of funding. By including this requirement, Congress recognized that the outlying areas, in fact, have unique needs that may be better understood and better addressed by the Department which has the most historical and administrative experience with the island Territories. In particular, we believe that the provision reflects the intent of Congress that the two Secretaries exercise discretion to provide additional flexibility to the governments of the Territories in permitting funds to be used for projects and services other than those mandated or authorized for States, including urgently needed infrastructure projects which cannot be funded through other provisions of the Act.

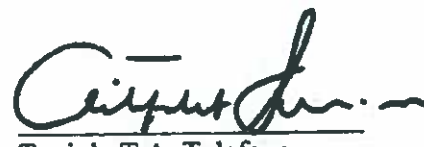
Accordingly, on behalf of our fellow citizens in these remote outlying areas, we respectfully request that you direct the Secretary of the Interior to undertake the lead role in the administration of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund for the Territories, as authorized and permitted by the Act, in order to ensure the flexibility for the Territories that Congress intended. There is precedent for the delegation of interagency authority with respect to the administration of federal programs in the U.S. Territories, and in the interest of maximizing the long-term benefit of the Stabilization Fund program consistent with its statutory purpose, we urge you to consider its application in this instance.

Very truly yours,


John P. de Jongh, Jr.
Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands


Felix P. Camacho
Governor of Guam


Benigno R. Fitial
Governor of the Commonwealth of
the Northern Marianas Islands


Togiola T.A. Tulafono
Governor of American Samoa

cc: The Honorable Arne Duncan
The Honorable Kenneth L. Salazar